

LET NOTHING YOU DISMAY

By GEORGE MORGENSTERN



THE LINE of the old carol, "Let nothing you dismay", is a constant comfort, at Christmas and at all seasons. There is much in the world to cause dismay, in small things as in great. These distractions should not be allotted too great a power to disturb.

It is, perhaps, a small thing that the attempt should have been made to improve the acoustics of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Modern men have a passion to put things right, and there was a flaw in St. Paul's. By electronic devices, amplifiers, and the like, the Word was to be made unmistakably loud and clear.

Yet a certain vague dismay was attendant upon this report, for the improvement was designed to overcome, among other distortions, the echo in the Whispering Gallery, a place which has always had an attraction to the mind, even if one has only read about it. One recalls the impression the Whispering Gallery made on De Quincey when, as a school-boy on holiday, he stood at the further end of the gallery and heard the whisper of his friend come to him "as a deafening menace in tempestuous uproars".

He had a sentiment of nervous recoil from any word or deed that could not be recalled, mindful of the Roman warning, *Nescit vox missa reverti* — a word once uttered is irrevocable. This ominous caution would unexpectedly come to his mind in moments of decision, and the experience of the Whispering Gallery would stir a somber moralization ever and again. De Quincey would think, "Thou wilt not say that what thou doest is altogether approved in thy secret heart. Even now thy conscience speaks against it in sullen whispers; but at the other end of thy long life gallery that same conscience will speak to thee in volleying thunders."

Indeed, no artifice will suffice to rub out the reverberations, the winding echoes of the past. Sir Christopher Wren must have been so impressed when he set about building the present St. Paul's, placing it on the fire-leveled ruins of three earlier churches which had stood on the same site, probably the oldest ground built upon in London.

Digging for a foundation for his cathedral, Sir Christopher found that the speaking past lay at every hand. Under the earth he found ivory and wooden pins from the winding sheets of ancient Britons. Above them lay the graves of the Saxons, and, at another level, Roman horns, lamps and lachrymatories, in which the tears of friends were collected

to be buried with the dead. All of this, in the phrase of Sir Thomas Browne, rested under the drums and tramlings of three conquests.

Sir Christopher dug until he came to sand and seashells, and to the London clay, and even that was not a beginning in time. The seashells would have transmitted to the ear the stirrings of something even more remote. St. Paul's was built on a solid footing, and on a murmurous past. The effect of the Whispering Gallery was accidental, but it provided a complement to all the rest. Now all this is being changed. The web, the fabric of echo and remembrance is to go.

THERE ARE ALWAYS insistent people to improve us and the world we live in. So much of our world is marked for change that men tend to become preoccupied with the superficialities of change, as if the destruction of the past were always good. To some of the apostles of advance, as well as to the unthinking, the more radical the change the better it must be. Yet conservatives have much to support their position. They retain the sense of continuity in human existence, and they know that there are truths which not only endure but are eternally final.

The engineers who look to improving the carrying capacity of a sermon are relatively harmless in their prepossession with removing "interference" at the cost of a more subtle interference with the muted voice of past time. There can be interference in communication between God and man. Perhaps the image of John Donne, who was Dean of St. Paul's and is entombed there, shares a passing amusement. His was the only monument that escaped the Great Fire.

"He stands", we are told, "with his hands folded and the shroud covering him from head to foot; his intense, sardonic face, with its eyes closed, looks out from his hood and is the only thing of him that shows . . . In that great, complacent, Italianate building, which looks so much smaller than it is, a building designed with skill but no inspiration . . . this small, crinkled statue is like a word of challenge or rebuke, and of lordly derision. No place but a Gothic building would properly hold it . . . He had affinity with the scholars of the Middle Ages in whom he was profoundly read; and that affinity is never more strongly realized than when one is reading his Sermons with their passionate, tortuous, extravagant logic and their towering caverns of gloom shot with unearthly fire."

On this labor to render audible a pulpit from which this thunder shakes through the centuries, Donne might smile indulgently. But we cannot imagine him smiling at the labors of those "social pioneers" who would extinguish the total recollection of man, the thoughts, the teachings, the hopes, the reaching upward of 2,000 years; the consciousness of time and the unity of the present with the past; the compassionate mercies of God.

These are the men who offer, in substitution for sometimes faltering and inadequate faith, a more awful certainty — the discipline which condemns the soul of man to a lifetime of forced labor at the task of believing nothing.

We have seen the leaden manifestations of that humorless dedication to the purpose of expunging all past truths. The intention has shown itself in the fantastic Soviet claims to having invented everything. It has been disclosed in a thousand counterfeits, each the denial of truth and the elevation of its opposite. In this perverted vocabulary, slavery is freedom, death is life, war is peace, and God a despot. All of the good of the past has been blotted out. This sinister world, if it should prevail, would cut us away from all communion with yesterday. In this world the galleries are silent, the halls soundless. No whisper is given back from any wall, except the wall of the dungeon.

Those within its power who resist the Communist dictation die, but every life so spent testifies to the uncertainty of tyranny and the failure of dread and death to convert the spirit. So did slipping Rome try to prevent what was to be. The underground, in the very catacombs of Rome, where a living faith flourished in the burial place of the dead, prevailed against the imperial power. Victory was won by a host whose only armament was faith.

NONE OF THIS STRUGGLE AND triumph is lost to us. The muffled but murmurous past throws its echoes off the walls of the mind. In the Whispering Gallery of time there is courage enough, and faith enough, for us all.

"Thus we are men", said Sir Thomas Browne, "and we know not how; there is something in us that can be without us, and will be after us, though it is strange that it hath no history what it was before us, nor cannot tell how it entered in us." When Sir Walter Raleigh was taken from the Tower to the block, he calmly remarked that "the world is itself but a larger prison, out of which some are daily selected for execution".

These are the expressions of men who loved life, who were willing to invest that pilgrimage with dignity and pomp befitting an important experience, but in whose perspective life was only a transitory station on a longer way. It is a theme that is endlessly repeated: "Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever?"

One of the great stories of the world is about Sir Thomas More, Chancellor of England, and a certain "Winchester man", who was "grievously vexed with very vehement and grievous tentations of desperation, and could never be rid of it, either by counsel or prayer of his own or his friends". A friend brought him to More, who prayed for him and rid him of his trouble, so that ever afterward the Winchester man's only ease of mind in sore adversity was when More prayed for him.

In later years, having come into dispute with Henry VIII, More was condemned to death. Another attack coming on, and the news abroad that More was to be beheaded, the Winchester man ran all the way to London and stepped forward to More just as the procession went to Tower Hill.

"Mr. More", he cried, "I am as ill troubled as ever I was. Pray for me." And More, recalling his present engagement with the headsman, made an unaccented reference to the fact that he, too, had his troubles, saying, "And do thou pray for me." And so he went forward and lost his head and the burden of another man's woes with it, having promised, "Go thy ways in peace: I will not fail to pray for thee."

In the great society of the Christian world no man is ever alone. One may smile at the Winchester man, who thought that his extremity was as great as More's, but in that extremity he had a friend and was sustained, while More had the ultimate resource, as his words on the scaffold attest: he died "the King's good servant, but God's first".

NOT ONLY IS THE CHRISTIAN society a society of great words, great deeds, and great men with whom we feel kinship through time, but the Christian faith is set in a landscape as wide as the world, yet forever familiar and comforting.

The Apostle Paul saw heaven, but could not describe it: "It is not lawful for a man to utter" that experience. Sir John Mandeville, his mind ranging outward in incredible adventures, provided a naive, touching grace note: "Of Paradise cannot I speak properly. For I was not there. It is far beyond. And that grieveth me. And also I was not worthy."

When you lose the pole star, you rise the Southern Cross, and the sailors fancied it was "a brooch the Virgin Mary lost from her breast in the daylight, when she went up to heaven. 'Twas her Son gave it to her, they fancied, but 'twas always to be found in the dark." Frederick Martens, on the voyage to Spitzbergen, saw "a mass of ice curiously workt and carved, as it were, by the sea, like a church with arched windows and pillars". All mariners knew that "the way lay as open to heaven by water as by land". God was never far away.

That sense is part of the celebration of the Christmas story. The dedication that began with the birth of a single Child has communicated itself in the passage of almost two thousand years to an infinite host. It is a faith not only of majestic overtones and iron commands, but of everyday comforts and the consolations of the commonplace. Its star leads to a manger, humble and familiar. Its promise leads beyond the stars. It speaks with a voice that need not ever shout — the voice of a Child.

From the prophecy that "they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God is with us", to the last assurance, "and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world", it is unforgettable and unforgotten.

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Capital Punishment The Only Cure: Even Old Scrooge would hardly think of beheading Santa Claus during Christmas week. But, in the light of all the evidence, the judicious, impartial and unsentimental mind of HUMAN EVENTS is compelled to call for the death sentence. There is no other way. Like Socrates, he must die for the heinous crime of "corrupting".

A new Administration promises to "clean up the Washington mess". Can it? Not while Old Nick is around. Not while he keeps whispering into our inner-most ear the seductive story of something for nothing, through government; not while he speaks in dulcet tones about costless subsidies and handouts without limit; not while he serenades us with songs of high wages and low prices; not while he repeats the siren refrain of free rent and free lunches; not while he calms our fears with the sedative, "only the other fellow pays taxes". The consequent corruption of such propaganda even an Eisenhower cannot clean up.

Are there Commies in government? Of course. Is graft rampant in Washington? Sure. Is the management of our public affairs characterized by waste, inefficiency, boondoggling and downright dishonesty? How could it be otherwise? So long as we heed the counsel of Old Nick, just so long will the "mess" continue.

So, reluctant as we are to disturb the spirit of Yuletide, our judgment must be that the demise of Santa Claus is the only cure for the ills of the nation.

Clothing the Naked: The spirit of this Yuletide might well be reinforced if individuals play Santa Claus on their own in response to a certain moving appeal for charitable funds. In the Middle East, a million fear-ridden and helpless Arab refugees are desperately in need of cloth, clothing, footwear and blankets. In this fifth winter of exile from the Palestine which was their home for a dozen centuries, this section of the Arab world must be wondering why the Christian western world does not come to their aid. "Words are totally inadequate to convey to you what it actually means to look into the eyes of these refugee children", says Dorothy Thompson, the columnist, who recently visited the Near East. "They tell a story of fear, suffering, angry rebellion and utter frustration."

These poor creatures have no "minority voting bloc" in the United States to forward their appeals to the U.S. Treasury and Congress. Nor do more than a handful of those known as "civic leaders" possess the courage and humanity to back up the organization called The American Middle East Relief (Suite 4824, 350 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y.) now seeking funds. Yet, there must be some who, aware of our responsibility and our diplomatic blundering which helped create this great human tragedy, will send that organization gifts "to clothe the naked".

Taft Wins: The Senator from Ohio now stands unopposed for the post of Majority Leader of the Senate, and even his bitterest critics concede that "he's in". Those who wished Ike to purge Taft and sought to build up a cabal against him in Congress have now thrown in the sponge. The Senator's victory is only surprising because the eastern internationalist press for weeks has sought to present a picture of an Eisenhower steamroller inexorably crushing the right wing of the GOP in Congress and its leader.

The first act took place at the time of the appointment of Mr. Martin Durkin to the post of Secretary of Labor. Taft called this choice "incredible", and it was. Why a man who had fought to elect

Stevenson should be selected and honored while millions who broke with the Democratic Party to vote for Ike were thereby affronted has not been coherently explained by anybody. Taft was again cast as the villain of the act, as he so often has been in the past when he was supremely right and his critics wrong.

L'affaire Durkin crystallized increasing and resentful feeling among Taft followers who believed that Dewey and his Eastern allies in the GOP had set up the cabinet list and arranged the Durkin matter and that this performance was a curtain raiser to purging Taft in the Senate. Resentment rose when objections to Ike's cabinet appointments were described as infringements on the Presidential prerogative.

Actually, the Constitution provides (Article II, section 2) that officials (including cabinet officers) shall be nominated "by and with the advice of the Senate". Hence, Taft was well within his rights in criticizing the Durkin appointment. Also, the manner in which this appointment and that of Secretary of the Treasury Humphrey were announced was subject to criticism. It is custom and courtesy for the senior Senator to be consulted or at least advised of appointments of individuals from his state, or within his committee jurisdiction.

But meanwhile the fictitious steamroller, as pictured in the Eastern press, seemed to be rolling down on the Taft wing of the Party. For a while, it looked as if the Dewey wing would dictate the GOP organization of the Senate.

Finally, last week the chips were down. Senator Carlson, Ike lieutenant, canvassed the Senatorial situation and discovered that there was only one picture — Taft had the votes and could be majority leader if he wanted to. Reason: growing rebellion against Dewey influence and resentment because of infringement of senatorial courtesy. Carlson bowed to the prevailing breeze and announced he was for Taft for leadership. He accepted the inevitable. (The Eastern press, of course, tried to picture it as Taft persuading Carlson that as majority leader he, Taft, would work with Eisenhower harmoniously and the President-elect graciously permitting it.)

Yet, all the above does not deal with the question whether Taft ought to serve as majority leader, in his own interest and that of the conservative wing of the Party. Apparently Taft thinks he should. But many close friends of Taft think he should not, fearing that he will become the vassal of the Executive arm. Some who recall the Twenties say that GOP majority leader Senator Watson was simply the representative of the GOP White House in the Senate; that Taft can't maintain his independence (any more than Jim Watson could), and can't sway the White House. All that remains to be seen. Anyway, it's Taft who will serve as majority leader.

Foreign Boondoggling: Secretary of Commerce Sawyer last week planted a time bomb under Mr. Harold Stassen. Sawyer returned from an inspection tour of Europe and made public a report of his findings which, if it means anything at all, means that "mutual security" and other economic aid should be drastically curtailed if not completely eliminated. Stassen has recently been named Mutual Security Administrator by General Eisenhower.

The young man from Minnesota reached the end of his political rope during the last year — presidential chances microscopic and mass political following non-existent. The MSA post (how did he get it?) seemed to offer a prospect that he could create a little "job empire", if Congress renewed the \$6 billion of foreign aid funds. But now Sawyer's statement can be used on Capitol Hill to scuttle the opportunity for Stassen to build such an empire. The new MSA head will have to either (1) fight desperately for foreign aid before unsympathetic committees or (2) join the economizers in destroying his own position.

Mallarkey: The latest (is it the last?) stand of the fellow-travellers in the State Department is the claim that ousting of Department officials by loyalty boards "demoralizes" the service. Diplomats, it is

asserted, will fear later disciplining by such boards and so will not write honest and candid reports. This view is currently broadcast by friends in the press. It is, of course, obvious "mallarkey". Only those who have some reason to fear loyalty investigations as a result of past records feel this way. The old-time, honest "American" diplomats do not share this feeling — that is, those who have not already been fired, shelved or squeezed out of important posts by the dominant diplomatic set put in by the New and Fair Deals and careerists who for reasons of personal ambition played along with the line of Roosevelt and Truman and the latter's anonymous White House advisers.

UN and Foundations: Much blame for "selling" the innocent American people on the United Nations falls on the great tax-free foundations, now the subject of an investigation by a congressional committee under the chairmanship of Representative Eugene Cox (Ga.). If the Cox committee perseveres, as did the McCarran committee, they will look more deeply into the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (which in 1947 and 1948 had as president, one Alger Hiss).

The Yearbooks of the Carnegie foundation for 1945 and 1946 testify at length and in great detail just how, and at approximately what cost, a fraudulent conception of the United Nations, based upon the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals of 1944, was put over on the people and the Senate. It is a story which reads badly now — with the UN and its Communist staff members in disgrace before the country. The tale is told in these Yearbooks by Drs. Finch and Shotwell of the foundation. It includes the fact that, through the operation of a propaganda set-up by the State Department which cost the taxpayers approximately \$90,000,000 in three years, we all paid through the nose for the privilege of being told how to think about the United Nations and how to browbeat our Senators into voting to ratify the Charter of the UN.

The Yearbooks of this foundation for 1945, 1946 and 1947 reveal how Professor Shotwell's Division of Economics and History "helped" the UN's preparations unit (of which — by the way — Alger Hiss was at first acting, then actual, head). This division supplied five "studies" by Professor Max Laserson for "confidential use" to the unit, on the subject of "The Place of the Soviet Union in the Comity of Nations", and "The Old Pan-Slavism and the New Slavophile Movement", and "ethnic population analyses" which were designed to justify the Soviet partition and satellizing of Poland. The latter study also justified Soviet absorption of Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Byelorussia and argued for the inclusion of Hungary, Bulgaria and Bessarabia, as well as Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, within the sphere of the Kremlin's dominance.

Between Covers: A brilliant exposé of the Communist and left-wing nature of the organized opposition to the McCarran immigration act, entitled "The Plot Against the McCarran-Walter Act", by Herbert G. Moore in the *National Republic*, December, 1952 issue. For reprints write *National Republic*, 511 Eleventh Street, N.W., Washington 4, D. C.

—— "They War on Our Schools", a pamphlet containing a series of broadcasts by John T. Flynn, published by America's Future, Inc., 210 E. 43rd Street, New York 17, N. Y. How a number of influential educators, teamed up with socialist propagandists and politicians, have been trying, for twenty years, to use public schools to shape the minds of children in support of socialist theories.

—— Under way — a book manuscript by General Bonner Fellers, who has contributed a number of articles to HUMAN EVENTS and other publications on the subject of national defense. The book will be a plea for primary reliance on air power for U.S. defense. To be published by Henry Regnery Company in the Spring.

—— Reported that Colonel Charles Lindbergh is at work on a book on air power.

—— Also a book in preparation by Professor E. Merrill Root, author of the popular piece in HUMAN EVENTS (July 30) entitled "Darkness at Noon in American Colleges".

Democracy at Bay, by Felix Somary. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.50. Reviewed by William Henry Chamberlin.

If there were a prize for the most intellectually stimulating book of the year, this would be a promising candidate. Hungarian by birth, Swiss by naturalization, Felix Somary brings to this work a sharply inquiring mind, a wide range of political and economic erudition and a long period of practical experience in business and finance.

Somary is a master of wit and paradox, as anyone who has talked with him (he spends a fair amount of his time in Washington) knows. His world outlook is that of the old-fashioned liberal who believes that there can be no free state without free individuals, who is profoundly hostile to big government and who is convinced that property rights are among the most precious of human rights.

He clearly does not feel at home in the twentieth century, with its demagogues and dictators, its wars of extermination, its harnessing of the individual to the juggernaut of the leviathan state and he appeals again and again to the lost civilized values of the nineteenth century or of still earlier periods.

For Somary is almost as distrustful of the French Revolution as was Edmund Burke. He sees in the ideas and practices of the French Jacobins many of the seeds of present day evils; the Jacobins favored a government unlimited in its discretionary powers and a state so powerful that it could do everything except turn a woman into a man. As Somary says: "The era of the French Revolution tore down all barriers that restricted the scope of action of the state."

Somary is inclined to equate democracy with liberty — a common assumption in the United States, but debatable nevertheless. For democracy without careful specifications for individual liberty can easily become a formidable tyranny and has often been a prelude to personal absolutism. This is recognized by Somary himself in one of the incisive sentences which engrave themselves upon the reader's memory:

"It is the curse of the Jacobin and Communist doctrines that they have made tyranny popular."

The author lays down two conditions for the development of democracy along lines of the common interest. Its citizens must be independent of the state and the state must be independent of external pressure. And he is almost guilty of understatement when he adds that "these two kinds of independence are increasingly threatened".

Somary is convinced that freedom and direct taxation are incompatible and recalls that the American colonists rebelled against minor excise and stamp taxes. Modern Americans submit to exactions incomparably more severe with scarcely a murmur. "A measure (direct taxation) that was regarded as inconsistent with freedom even by autocrats such as Augustus, Mohammed and Louis XIV is accepted without resistance in the twentieth century."

The great American-Russian confrontation, foreseen over a century ago by de Tocqueville, is discussed with originality and discernment. Perhaps the most striking feature of the book is a series of epigrams, presented as "laws of modern society". Their quality and tendency are indicated by the following examples:

"In public life, the greater the guilt, the less the expiation." . . . "The more functions the state assumes the less is it possible to control the administration." . . . "The greater and more diversified the power of government, the smaller is the influence of the people." . . . "The greater the pressure of the government, the lower the resistance of the masses."

Small as Somary's book is, it almost defies reviewing; it must be read to be fully savored.

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